

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

February 12, 2007

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Jason Rosenberg - Acting Chair, Jane Brown, Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Linda Hiller, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Janna Zwerner
REGRETS: Rob Caruso, Herb Cole, Douglas Sweet
STAFF: Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes
GUESTS: Jeff Hutter, Heather Platt from Carroll Center for the Blind

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm and was chaired by Jason Rosenberg, Acting Chairperson. The agenda was reviewed and introductions were made around the table welcoming all.

Minutes of 1/17/07 were accepted .

DISABILITIES AUDIT discussion:

Janna wrote a press release and sent it to Barbara and Lowell. They left space in the press release for a quote from the Mayor, or Greater Boston Fair Housing Center or MOD. The press release is short and titled: "1st in the Nation-Newton Disabilities Audit". Barb sent it to Henry Korman for review but she hasn't heard back yet. She'll keep the Committee posted.

Lowell said Mike Kruse suggested that PR be sent to the TAB as an Op-ed piece. It was discussed that the current shorter version is appropriate for dissemination to the disabilities community and to others. The Op-ed piece could be more substantive and timed in conjunction with FHTF, for April's Fair Housing month.

The first goal is to get the shorter press release version out. It was suggested the press release also go to the Mass Bar Association and Real Estate boards. It was discussed that when we do the larger PR piece, it would be helpful to give examples of positive and negative experiences.

The Jan. 29th training was part of the FHIP grant secured by the Housing Office of the Planning and Development Department. Bev and Jason attended it, as did staff from Newton and the Metro West Consortium communities. Jason reported that as members from other communities attended the FHIP training, they wondered if their communities should conduct such audits. But after sitting through the training, they determined that discrimination is everywhere and such money is better spent on education.

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for February by Lowell

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Any discussion that took place at the meeting, other than Lowell's reading of the report, is noted below each appropriate bullet item and will start with the words "It was noted".

- **Current Projects:**

(Lowell's email report noted: There has been no change in any of our construction projects during the past month.)

- Police Headquarters Annex Access Ramp (Project CD0203A. Expended, \$245,218; Budget balance, \$5,331; Building Dept. budget, \$66,600) – On our final inspection, we found two areas of work that need corrections. The railings need some minor corrections and the concrete surface of the ramp needs to be torn up and re-poured. There were a number of places on the surface of the ramp that exceeded the

maximum slope allowance. The work cannot be completed until we have consistently warmer weather. (EDC: April 2007)

It was noted that Lowell was told that the contractor will jack-hammer the ramp so it can be replaced in the spring with an even slope.

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Projects CD0203B and CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$14,386) – We have ordered the installation of audible ped signals at the intersection of Walnut and Cabot Streets. We are also trying to work with the Traffic Engineer to improve the pedestrian crossing at Centre Street @ Centre Ave. in Newton Corner. (EDC: fall 2007).

- Wellington Park Access (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$10,000) – No change since last report. Our project is an asphalt walkway to provide an accessible route from the park entrance to some benches and to the basketball and tennis courts. DPW will do the work. The work has been delayed because of disagreement among residents regarding the location of additional walkways through the park that are to be funded by the City's CPA budget. The project will be completed in the spring. (EDC: spring 2007)

- Ware's Cove Accessible Connector Path (Project CD0403A. Expended, \$8,562; Budget balance, \$10,178) – No change since last report. Construction is almost completed on the accessible path that begins at the field house, passes east of the children's play area, and connects with the accessible path that begins north of the playground and runs to the pump house on the way to Purgatory Cove. A few locations in the path need minor improvements and these will be made in the spring. (EDC: May 2007)

- Benches (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – No change since last report. The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when our construction of walkways in the park is completed. (EDC: summer 2007)

- Curb Cuts (Project CD0703D. Expended, \$37,482; Budget balance: \$106,747) – No change since last report. The Dept. of Public Works has ended its curb cut work for the summer on the designated sites between Parker Street and Newton South High School. In the spring, they will begin work on the next phase of this project, which includes 40 new curb cut locations. The majority of the new locations are on Woodland Road from Hancock Street to Windermere Road. Mayor's Committee members are still encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (*Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.*)

- School Administration Building Access Improvements (Project CD0603A. Expended, \$21,538; Budget balance, \$12,169) – No change since last report. This project is almost complete. DPW has reconstructed the old stairs near Walnut Street and we have ordered the installation of new railings. (EDC: December 2006)

- Public Facilities and Parks Access (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$67,293) – No change since last report. The Mayor's Committee has voted to include funds for increased accessibility in Newton parks in the current year plan. The one plan that has been presented and approved is for \$30,000 to construct an accessible route from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project will be managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Department of Public Works. A proposed second part of this project is the re-construction of two sets of stairs in Burr Park and the installation of railings on all three sets of stairs in the park. We received an estimate of \$9,000 from DPW for the cost of re-constructing the stairs with limestone. The existing stones are too worn to be usable. The estimate for railings for the two sets of stairs off Park Street is \$2,243.60. If the Mayor's Committee recommends proceeding with stair re-construction,

the work will be done in the spring. (EDC: October 2007)

It was noted by Lowell that the total estimate is \$11,243 and that the DPW never goes over budget. When HUD was here, they requested that the City take care of it situation. We waited for Parks and Recreation to build the stairs but they did not. Lowell requested that MCPD approve the funds.

A motion was made by Lucie, it was seconded and passed to have MCPD appropriate the \$11,243 in funding.

○ **Projects near completion:**

Police Headquarters Annex accessible ramp and entrance,
Ware's Cove connector path,
School Administration Building accessible entrance.

BUDGET DISCUSSION (presented by Lowell)

Lowell presented a hand-out with the following information:

FY06-10 PROPOSED ACCESS PROJECTS:

Selected by the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities on July 19, 2004

FY06

75,360.00	Ed Center Access (\$70,000 to Police Annex)
47,100.00	Curb Cut construction (all to FY07 curb cut construction)
18,840.00	Projects identified [to Brigham House (\$4K) Police Annex, Auburndale Library]

FY07

42,532.00	Curb Cut construction (Total budge is now \$144,000)
68,050.00	Public parks and public facilities access (we've allocated: \$30K-Newton Ctre playground Path \$11,243 Burr Park)
8,506.00	Accessible pedestrian signal (Total budget is now \$14,300)
8,506.00	Projects to be identified

127,594.00 TOTAL

For Fiscal Year 2008, Lowell suggests the Committee consider what items they want. He thinks curb cuts will probably be \$42K more for this FY08. Overall, our funding for FY08 should stay at approximately \$127K or a little less.

Jason suggests a separate email be sent to MCPD ahead of the next meeting so members can consider projects. We'll revisit this item at the March meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Miscellaneous Items:

- There was discussion about various locations where there are access problems, like Walnut Street where we're still waiting for the whole street to be done by the state.
- Lowell reported that because of Heather's advocacy, Clint Schuckel changed the length of the APS at Beacon and Centre (27 seconds) and Beacon and Langley (21 seconds).
- Jeff said there was a problem with curb cuts at the Chestnut Hill mall.

Café St. Petersburg (53-57 Union Street):

Bev sent an email to John Lojek (Inspectional Services) and Bruce Proia (Fire) about the Café matter reported at the last meeting. Lowell visited and saw items piled at the bottom of the entrance. Jason followed up by email with John, who was aware of the Café when they were in Brookline. The restaurant has a hearing with the Architectural Access Board on 2/27/07.

Newton Wellesley Hospital

Girard was at the hospital 3 weeks ago. He's been going there for a long time and praised the care he's received. He went down the Shipley hallway and to the new hallway to the new emergency room. There was no automatic door opener for the doors. Girard got into a situation where he was trapped. Girard's been in touch with Senator Creem. Nancy Pendleton is director of Emergency Care Services and helped Girard be in touch with the appropriate departments.

Lowell and Girard made a site visit and conducted a site survey. There is a microwave door opener at the outside entrance. They noticed several infractions including lack of Braille signage in many places, lack of some door openers, and placement of barrels blocking access. They met with Mr. Girarnamy, who oversees access issues, and several other officials. When Lowell and Girard revisited the doors where Girard had been previously trapped, the hospital had corrected the doors with magnets so the doors stay open, stating that the doors weren't meant to be closed.

Jason suggested Lowell write a letter to Newton Wellesley Hospital thanking them for their help so far and indicating that we look forward to continuing to work with them. There is another egress door that needs an automatic opener. Lucie brought up the handicap parking outside the surgical center. Jason asked members to email any items they notice about NWH to Lowell. Meanwhile Lowell and Girard will write the initial letter documenting what they've found to date.

The Committee should also recommend to the Planning and Development department and the Inspectional Services Department that companies must also have a "consultant" who can make sure that whatever is built is compliant and accessible.

Citizen's Bank on Centre St.

Rosemary reported that there is bank, which took over an old bank location, that doesn't have an automatic door opener. Jason said a letter could go to the bank asking them to consider an automatic door opener. Lowell had met with them previously about HP spaces so he'll ask.

Jason suggested that we invite someone from Planning and Development to one of our next meetings; Lowell will start the process.

Other: There was a suggestion of having elected officials or their representatives attend a meeting.

Veteran's Taxi

Barbara reported Veteran's Taxi Cabs stop and wait for passengers at Newton Highlands. Their vehicles always extend into the crosswalk. Barbara has asked them not to park there and they retort they're not parked in the walkway, even though they are partially covering it. They refuse to move.

Jason suggests the following actions:

1. A letter from the Mayor to the Taxi Company.
2. An article to the TAB with a photo of the infraction.
3. Notifying the Police with the Mayor's involvement.

The Committee made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm.

The next meeting will be Monday, March 19 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.